

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes for January 28, 2016
Public Library Conference Room

Present: Billie Murray
Kristen Cooper
Jan Derry, Chair
Marlene Robinson-Savino, Vice Chair
Don Spencer, Secretary
Tim Hairston – Liaison w/ State HRC

Meeting called to order by Jan Derry, Chair, at 6:35 p.m. The agenda was approved as distributed.

Public Session: One visitor attended the meeting. There were no participants in the public session.

Minutes: No action was taken on the minutes of 11/19 or 12/10/15.

Communications: Jan Derry presented extensive update information on the Community Housing Action Partnership (CHAP) and the status of compliance of housing projects with Justice Department directives on Fair Housing. On a motion by Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Billie Murray, the Commission voted without dissent to share information and wording from its resolutions on housing with the CHAP.

Don Spencer reported on the Interfaith Committee on WV Friends for Syrian Refugees meeting held on January 14. There were 180 persons attending. The meeting was held in anticipation of an opportunity to help welcome WV's share of the 10,000 national allotment agreed to by the Obama Administration. It was reported that there are over 11 million Syrians that are displaced from their homes, 4.3 million of whom have become refugees.

Tim Hairston and Jan Derry reported on the January 18, 2016 MLK Day at the Met Theatre. Over 350 persons attended the acclaimed event which this year focused the International Impact of Dr. King's leadership.

Concern was expressed about the Legislature's deliberation on the WV Freedom of Conscience Protection Act (HB2508/SB11). The legislation is allegedly being promoted by the American Legislative Exchange organization and has proved to be divisive in Indiana with local lawsuits reported.

Another introduction of concern at the Legislature is the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (HR4012) which would allow individuals, organizations, businesses and any legal entity to have the right to argue that based on religious beliefs, they do not have to follow the law, including not allowing others to have basic civil rights related to employment, housing, reproductive rights and public accommodations. Fairness WV is very concerned and has a Lobby Day on 2/9.

The matter of centralizing a statewide mental health facility for children 4-21 at a private for profit Dazzy Vance Mountain Retreat at Logan is also a priority concern. The institution would cost the State \$500 per child per day – nearly \$13 M per year-based, and also essentially take away the option investing in a lower cost community-based in-home treatment service system.

Priority Items: The Commission reviewed the draft annual report for 2015 and thirteen proposed priorities for 2016. On a motion by Vice Chair Marlene Robinson-Savino, seconded by Billie

Murray, the documents were approved without dissent. The status of the Commission membership was discussed at length in anticipation of July 1 transition.

.Progress Reports: Don Spencer reported that First Annual WVU Community Human Rights Film Festival will begin on Tuesday, February 2. Copies of the poster for the event were distributed to the Commissioners. Commissioners wishing to attend the 6 p.m. celebration preceding the event are urged to contact Don Spencer.

Marlene Robinson-Savino indicated that there would be a report on the 24/7 Human Rights Line at the next meeting.

With Fran Whiteman no longer able to provide leadership on gender identity and sexual orientation issues, a plan was formulated to ask ex-officio member Anne Marie Lofaso to provide leadership in drafting a human rights ordinance for the commission to present to the city. Examples reviewed included such comprehensive ordinances enacted in Salem, OR and Boulder, CO. It was hoped that persons working with Anne Marie Lofaso would be able to summarize WV codes for such a draft ordinance on such topics as unlawful employment practices, unlawful housing practices, unlawful public accommodation practices, intimidation, and exceptions. It is requested that such a draft incorporate protections for domestic partnerships, gender identity, and sexual orientation. (The present Morgantown HR Ordinance relates primarily to the Human Rights Commission.) The plan for developing the comprehensive ordinance was approved unanimously on a motion by Don Spencer, seconded by Marlene Robinson-Savino.

Jan Derry pointed out that the Inclusive City Planning Committee has suspended its work until the Diversity Planning Committee has completed its report.

Marlene Robinson-Savino reported on the recent work of the Diversity Committee and shared a draft of mission statements, goals statements, and projected diversity management strategies for the plan. Recommended changes included adding the word “inclusive” in the text of a projected mission statement as well as doing more research on options for doing quantitative measurements related to gender identity. The Committee reported having made contact with the Municipal Equity Index staff to request assistance in determining best practice methods for incorporating quantifiable equality criteria in diversity planning.

New Business:

Don Spencer presented a summary of an article on a faith action ID card utilized with refugee and immigrant persons in Greensboro, NC. The program is designed to provide ID coverage for persons unable to access government-issued IDs. The card program is based on a faith-based coalition’s brokering an arrangement between a local police department and refugees and immigrants for ID coverage with specified limitations. On a motion by Don Spencer, seconded by Marlene Robinson-Savino, the Commission agreed to forward the information to the Interfaith Committee on WV Friends for Syrian Refugees for consideration. The Commission stands ready to assist if requested.

Research is continuing on the possibility of presenting to the City Council a draft ordinance on Universal Design standards for new housing.

Due to the curfew of the Library facility where the HRC meeting was held, the remainder of the agenda was postponed until the February scheduled for 2/18/16.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Spencer 1/31/16

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